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Bill Would Require Notification Of CIA Undercover Operations

Associated Press

A bill ordering the CIA to share its secrets with Congress—and to give advance notice of undercover operations—won narrow 8 to 6 approval yesterday by the House Intelligence Committee.

The committee's five Republicans, who wanted to include wide-ranging other provisions sought by the CIA, joined Democratic Rep. Clement Zablocki (Wis.) in opposing the bill.

"We want to do something to help the agency," Rep. John Ashbrook (R-Ill.) said after the vote, complaining that the Democrats "just want to increase congressional oversight."

Actually, the CIA also has favored the idea of revising the congressional notification law, hoping to reduce from eight to two the number of House and Senate committees the agency must report to.

The intelligence bill, like a version passed 89 to 1 by the Senate earlier this month, would do just that, ordering the CIA to report to the intelligence committees of both houses.

However, it also demands prior notice of "special activities"—undercover operations in which secret agents try to influence events overseas. CIA Director Stansfield Turner, speaking for the Carter administra-

tion, has said the CIA is glad to give prior notice most of the time but that a flat demand for it is an infringement on executive branch authority.

The bill, approved yesterday is all that remains of the once-lengthy CIA charter, which included CIA-backed provisions to jail people who publicly identify secret agents and to exempt the agency from most of the Freedom of Information Act.

The Senate, and now the House committee, deleted those sections after failing to win wide agreement on a bill that would balance such provisions with new restrictions on CIA activities.

Another complication for the future of the remaining congressional notification bill is the existence of still another version, this one attached to foreign aid legislation by Zablocki's House Foreign Affairs Committee.

That provision, rejected so far by the Senate, would allow a president to forgo prior notice if he decided such a move "was essential to meet extraordinary circumstances" or to save lives.

After yesterday's vote on the intelligence bill, Zablocki asked that the legislation be sent to his committee for further consideration—and possibly amendment—before being sent on to the House floor.